

CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 13, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON FEBRUARY 13, 2024, AT 7:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor D. Michael Barber; Vice-Mayor Tanya Hockett; Samuel M. Bishop; Kim Bowman; Johana Hicks; Casey Jenkins; Tim Wilson

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren; Town Attorney Reid Broughton; Clerk of Council/Executive Assistant Tracy Heinline; Director of Public Works Jim Lancianese; Assistant Director of Public Works, Streets Travis Moles; Police Chief Chris Ramsey; Finance Director Valerie Tweedie; Special Projects Coordinator Wayne Nelson

REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Moment of Reflection
- B. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Jenkins.

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to request a public hearing for items B. through E. under Discussion and Action by Council. Hearing no second, the motion failed.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Conditional Use Permit request by Shah Development LLC, property owner, and Kevin Conner, applicant, to allow a single-family dwelling, on each of two (2) vacant lots, meeting the R-3 Multi-Family Residential District standards on property described as Snidow Heights Subdivision, Lot 50A and Lot 46A, located on the east and west sides of the existing dwelling at 685 Liberty Street, N.E. (Tax Parcels 528 – ((2)) – 46A and 50A; Parcel IDs 160387 and 160388) zoned B-3 General Business. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

Kevin Conner, Shah Development explained to Council that the single-family lots at Snidow Heights Subdivision would include 1- and 2-bedroom dwellings. Mr. Conner expressed that these dwellings would complement the neighborhood on Liberty Street. He asked that Council consider a vote at this time due to time restraints for pulling permits.

Councilwoman Bowman made a motion to add the conditional use permit by Shah Development to Discussion and Action by Council. Hearing no second, the motion failed.

- B. Conditional Use Permit request by Last Resort, Inc., property owners, and Joseph L. Simmons, applicant, to allow multiple-family dwellings (apartments) meeting the R-3 Multi-Family Residential District standards on approximately 4.841 acres located on the south side of Cambria Street, N.W., west of the Christiansburg Recreation Center at 1600 N. Franklin Street (Tax Parcels 466 – ((A)) – 8C and 8C2; Parcel IDs 032702 and 210032) zoned B-3 General Business. There is not a proposed number of units for the development. The maximum permitted residential density is 20 dwelling units per acre. The property designated as Business/Commercial on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

Rebecca Hubble, 1645 Forelmont Street, expressed concern for the increase in traffic the new residential project would bring to the surrounding area, including the stoplight/intersection at Cambria Street and N. Franklin Street. Mrs. Hubble explained the project would back up to her property and expressed concern for her property's value as well as the safety for her children that walk to and from school.

Tonia Winn, 1655 Forelmont Street, also noted concern for the density of the new project and the number of cars for the proposed lot. Ms. Winn added her concern for the aesthetics of the development and noted that the buildings would obstruct views and change the character of the neighborhood.

Judy Stephens, 1675 Forelmont Street, noted concerns for the topography for the property itself and not being conducive to high density building. Mrs. Stephens questioned where individuals would park when there were events at the Parks and Recreation Center. She expressed concern for her safety in the neighborhood and added that the traffic would increase at the intersection of N. Franklin Street and Cambria Street.

Ryan Hubble, 1645 Forelmont Street, opposed the proposed project on Cambria Street and expressed concern for water runoff, increase in traffic, safety of current residents, and the noise and pollution the new buildings could potentially bring.

Mayor Barber noted the Planning Commission recommended to not approve the conditional use permit request by Last Resort, Inc.

Councilwoman Bowman made a motion to add the conditional use permit request by Last Resort, Inc. to Discussion and Action by Council. Hearing no second, the motion failed.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of January 23, 2024
- B. Task Order No. 4 under Contract #237000023, Amendment 1 to provide comprehensive design services for replacing the anaerobic digester boiler in a new building at the Wastewater Treatment Plant for \$136,500
- C. Schedule public hearing for February 27, 2024 for a request by Cambria Storage Partners, LLC for an ordinance amending Chapter 34 "Traffic and Motor Vehicles" of the Christiansburg Town Code by adding Sec. 34-27 Operation of Golf Carts on Public Streets in regard to provisions for the limited operation of golf carts on Town public streets
- D. Schedule public hearing for March 12, 2024 for the issuance of VRA bond for improvement projects at the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Town Manager Wingfield clarified that item C. Operation of Golf Carts on Public Streets pertained to Cambria Storage Partners, LLC golf cart usage for driving between storage units only.

Councilwoman Hicks questioned the amount included in the VRA bond under item D. Finance Director Valerie Tweedie explained it was initially set at \$9 million but that total could increase to accommodate engineering improvements for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mrs. Tweedie explained it was recommended the Town have a public hearing for the maximum amount and then approval would be determined.

Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Aye; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- A. New River Valley Regional Commission Executive Director Kevin Byrd to provide an update on Commission activities and present regarding the collaborative New River Valley pandemic response timeline

Kevin Byrd addressed Council and gave an overview of the New River Valley Regional Commission and the regional pandemic response as well as information regarding Passenger Rail. Mr. Byrd gave a brief history of the Regional Commission and the supporting local governments and higher education institutions that help frame the organization. He explained that the Regional Commission was focused on collaborative impact helping the communities across the region work together for large scale projects. Mr. Byrd added that the Regional Commission also helps deliver technical assistance and spoke about the ongoing work to assist the Town of Christiansburg with the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Byrd explained the Regional Commission's growth in regional programs particularly during the pandemic and spoke about the increase in staff to assist with the many programs. He spoke about the Task Force After Action Report and explained that since there were so many activities that took place during the pandemic, they felt a report could be a reference for a potential future pandemic or other regional crisis. Mr. Byrd recognized the joint leadership of Dr. Noelle Bissell and retired Police Chief Anthony Wilson who helped in guiding the day-to-day decisions during the pandemic. He added that the New River Valley was the only region in Virginia and the country that pulled Cares Act dollars to respond as a region and the first to have a General Covid-19 Call Center and Regional Vaccine Call Center. Mr. Byrd gifted the Town a framed pandemic response timeline to remember the great work that took place during the pandemic response.

Mr. Byrd also spoke about the New River Valley Passenger Rail and gave a brief history of the project that began in 2013. He explained the project was facilitated by the Blacksburg Partnership that has evolved into an advocacy organization. Mr. Byrd added that the New River Valley Passenger Rail Station Authority works alongside the Blacksburg Partnership. He noted that the NRV Passenger Rail Station Authority was comprised of nine members: seven local governments and two universities. Mr. Byrd explained the Authority had adopted bylaws and went through a procurement process of architectural and engineering services for the Passenger Rail Station. He added that the Regional Commission had helped with the initial ridership and station location and worked on an ownership and maintenance study. Mr. Byrd explained that the Regional Commission had also secured a \$300,000 grant from the Appalachian and Regional Commission for architectural and engineering services. He added that the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) had released the 30% design drawings two weeks ago and just issued requests for proposals (RFP) for the 60% design. Mr. Byrd concluded that there would be more public engagement by the VPRA in April of this year due to an environmental review document they would examine before setting up the final station.

- B. New River Valley Regional Commission Director of Housing Jennifer Wilsie to present on the New River Valley Housing Trust Fund

Jennifer Wilsie gave Council an overview on the New River Valley Housing Trust Fund and the requests going before all local governments, universities, and several large employers to participate in a regional activity that would provide discretionary funds within the region for investing in affordable housing. Ms. Wilsie touched on the definition of affordable housing and explained that although it depends on how many members are in your household it also based on the median income for the area. She spoke about the New River Valley Home Consortium which was formed in 2007 and benefits all local governments and jurisdictions in the New River Valley. She explained those funds were a federal allocation from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which rotates around the region for projects.

Ms. Wilsie also spoke about the Regional Local Housing Study, completed in 2021 and gave data to measure the housing need in the region. She explained that this study also led to the creation of the Regional Housing Trust Fund. She clarified that the Regional

Housing Trust Fund was a dedicated funding source that would fund the preservation of affordable housing. Ms. Wilsie spoke about the goals of the trust fund and why there was a need for a fund. She explained that federal funding sources were beneficial, but they came with certain restrictions on how the funds were applied and having a trust will give the locality a choice in how funds were allocated. Ms. Wilsie explained the study group discussed several different annual funding scenarios and settled on a conservative model which was \$600,000 a year that would be split between local governments on a per capita basis, as well as contributions from non-governmental groups.

C. Wayne Nelson and Sun Tribe Solar Director of Strategy and Business Development Katherine Knight to present on Town solar project

Wayne Nelson, Special Projects Coordinator, introduced Sun Tribe Solar representatives to Council. Mr. Nelson gave a brief timeline of discussions regarding the solar energy project. He noted the Sustainability Committee began their discussions concerning solar in the summer of 2023 and in November of 2022 the Engineering Department staff issued a Solar Feasibility Study Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified firms to conduct the study. Mr. Nelson noted that out of four firms the Engineering Department selected Sun Tribe Solar for the study who presented their results to the Sustainability Committee in October 2023. Mr. Nelson explained there were nine Town facilities evaluated in the process: Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), Aquatic Center, Recreation Center, Public Works Operations Center, Wades Lane Landfill, Town Hall, Police Department, Fire Department, and Rescue Squad. He clarified the comprehensive study evaluated the buildings, roofs, and current utility rates. Mr. Nelson noted the WWTP was not eligible for solar due to steep north-facing slopes and floodplain. He added that although several sites had their challenges, the Recreation Center and Aquatic Center were optimal solar candidates. Mr. Nelson informed Council that Sun Tribe Solar had presented a Solar Power Purchase Agreement Services Proposal to the Sustainability Committee for the Town's consideration reflecting an approximate \$1.3M in savings over the life of a 25-year contract.

Katherine Knight, Director of Strategy and Business Development, spoke to Council and gave a summary regarding Sun Tribe Solar. Ms. Knight explained that Sun Tribe Solar was based in Charlottesville, Virginia and was the leading solar developer in Virginia. Ms. Knight expressed that Sun Tribe Solar's approach to solar was long-term partnerships with counties, public school districts across the state to bring both economic value to those areas and educational experiences for students in the schools.

Nick DiFerdinando, Director of Project Finance, spoke to Council regarding Proposals for Solar Power Purchase Agreements. Mr. DiFerdinando explained that for the purchaser there are no upfront costs or payments towards maintenance and operation of the system. He added there are no costs for decommissioning the system once the lifespan of the panels has ended which is typically 25 to 30 years. He explained the cost of solar equipment and the cost to install the equipment has diminished rapidly over the past 10 to 15 years. He added there has also been more tax incentives that go into making the cost of on-site solar electricity as affordable as ever.

Ms. Knight explained there were many benefits to working with solar electricity including cost savings and educational opportunities and would enjoy bringing those benefits to the community of Christiansburg.

Councilwoman Hicks expressed approval that the Town was discussing solar energy and questioned if Sun Tribe Solar received grants for their projects. Mr. DiFerdinando explained that projects were typically financed through a combination of solar renewable energy credits and investment tax credits.

Councilman Wilson clarified that the Town could spend funds to buy the solar equipment, but it would take longer to receive a return on investment. He explained the Sustainability Committee felt this a viable project to bring to Council and the public.

Mr. Nelson stated that the solar project information session was presented to both the Aquatic and Recreation Advisory Committees. He added that on February 8th he was accompanied by Building Official Jerry Heinline to Fluvanna County Schools where they observed multiple systems maintained by Sun Tribe Solar. He expressed that the Town had also received three positive references from Sun Tribe Solar clients.

Mr. Nelson explained the next steps for the solar energy project which included a public hearing, if approved for February 27, 2024, and advertising for competing solar proposals. He explained that after receiving competing solar proposals the potential public hearing would take place which would lead into potential Council action on March 12, 2024 on a Solar Franchise Ordinance and Power Purchase Agreement.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Jo Anne Price, Blacksburg resident and Christiansburg business owner, expressed concern for the Resolution to Adopt the Budget Amendment for the Montgomery Museum of Art and History. Mrs. Price noted that the museum's attendance had decreased since Covid-19 and that taxpayers were focused on cost-of-living finances rather than funding the museum. She also stated that FOIA requests she had received showed funding from Montgomery County and other localities for the museum. Mrs. Price urged Council to reconsider approving the budget amendment #7.

Mike Scarry, 11 Pepper Street, N.E., Christiansburg addressed the budget amendment #7 and noted he was a supporter of the Montgomery Museum and felt it was an important cultural source for Montgomery County and the Town of Christiansburg.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilman Wilson made motion for a public hearing for February 27, 2024 for the Solar Sustainability Project, seconded by Councilman Jenkins. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Aye; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A. Discussion of Planning Commission Application

Mayor Barber noted that before Council was an application from Mike Scarry for the position of Planning Commission member. He added that Mr. Scarry is the president of Hometown Security, Inc. and resides in the Town of Christiansburg.

Councilwoman Hicks questioned how the Town had advertised for the Planning Commission position. Mayor Barber explained that in the past the Town has advertised the position but with having no response, the Planning Commission was asked for nominations.

Councilman Wilson made a motion to approve Mike Scarry to serve on the Planning Commission, seconded by Councilwoman Hockett. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Nay; Hicks – Nay; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Abstain; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

B. Resolution to Adopt Budget Amendment #6 for increase of Mayor/Town Council salaries

Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern for the increase in salaries for Mayor and Town Council explaining that the community was struggling, and felt taxpayers were more concerned with cost of living. Mrs. Hicks expressed that although she thought the increase was deserved, she would vote against this budget amendment.

Councilman Wilson pointed out that Mrs. Hicks voted in favor of the increase in December 2023.

Councilman Bishop expressed that he had served on Council for 11 years and has not received a raise and felt the Town of Christiansburg should fall in line with the surrounding localities.

Councilwoman Bowman expressed that although she was new to Council, she already has an idea of the work it takes to serve. She continued that a great deal of studying and reading is involved to serve well and felt Council should be compensated.

Councilwoman Hockett expressed that it should be up to each Council member whether to accept the raise or not.

Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to approve the Resolution to Adopt Budget Amendment #6, seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Nay; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Aye; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

C. Resolution to Appropriate funds per Budget Amendment #6

Councilwoman Hicks reiterated her comments from the previous item.

Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to approve the Resolution to Appropriate funds per Budget Amendment #6, seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Nay; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Aye; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

D. Resolution to Adopt Budget Amendment #7 for increase of community support

Councilwoman Hicks expressed that the increase of community support for the Montgomery County Museum of Art and History had been a line item on the agenda several times. Mrs. Hicks noted that the museum should be a self-sustaining museum at this point.

Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to approve the Resolution to Adopt Budget Amendment #7 for increase of community support, seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Nay; Hicks – Nay; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Abstain; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

E. Resolution to Appropriate funds per Budget Amendment #7

Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to approve the Resolution to Appropriate funds per Budget Amendment #7, seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Nay; Hicks – Nay; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Abstain; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

IX. STAFF REPORTS

- A. Town Manager – no report.
- B. Town Attorney – no report.
- C. Other Staff – no report.

X. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Closed Meetings:

- 1. Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to enter into a Closed Meeting under Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711(A)(3), for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect

the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The Closed Meeting is being held for discussion of potential purchase of property located in downtown Christiansburg.

The second Closed Meeting under Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711(A)(3) is being held for discussion of potential sale of located at the intersection of Peppers Ferry Road, NW and Booker T. Washington Parkway, N.W. (an approximately 5-acre northeastern portion of Tax Parcel 435 – ((A)) – 3A, Parcel ID 270079). Motion seconded by Councilman Wilson. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Aye; Wilson – Aye.

Councilman Jenkins read a disclosure statement he had previously signed pertaining to his employment with the Montgomery Museum of Art and History and abstaining from discussions and votes pertaining to the museum. Mr. Jenkins noted that although he would abstain from the first closed meeting, he would like to participate in the second.

2. Reconvene in Open Meeting
3. Councilwoman Hockett made a motion to certify that the Town Council of the Town of Christiansburg meeting in Closed Meeting, to the best of each member's knowledge, discussed only the matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law and only such matters as are identified in the Resolution to enter into Closed Meeting. Councilman Wilson seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Bowman – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Hockett – Aye; Jenkins – Abstain; Wilson – Aye.

Motion Approved

4. Council action on the matters

Mayor Barber explained that Council has asked Town Manager Wingfield and Town Attorney Broughton to make further contact concerning the two properties that were discussed.

XI. COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilwoman Hockett suggested Council discuss holding a regularly scheduled work session each month to further discuss matters of Council. She added that if there were no items to discuss the meeting could be canceled.

Councilman Wilson reported the Department of Motor Vehicles in Christiansburg would be closing their building for renovations until March 25, 2024. Mr. Wilson also reported the Police Department would be participating in a program called "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" on March 15th at 3:30 p.m. He explained that the program collects linens and builds beds for households in need.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 10:03 p.m.



Tracy Heintz, Clerk of Council



D. Michael Barber, Mayor